



## **William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital**

### **Specialty Treatments Offered in the Madison VA PTSD Clinic 608-280-7084**

We offer short-term courses of scientifically supported treatments for PTSD. This means that research and clinical work show they help to reduce symptoms of PTSD.

#### **\*Individual Treatments\***

For these treatments, you'll meet one-on-one with the same therapist (usually on a weekly basis).

- **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)** The way you think about things affects how you feel and what you do. Traumatic experiences can change how you think about things, and this can keep you stuck in feeling anxious or angry, even though the experience is over. The focus of CPT is about two major areas: 1) how did your traumatic experience affect the way you think about yourself, others, and the world?; 2) how can you challenge those thoughts in way so you feel better?

For CPT, you'll meet with your therapist once-weekly for 50min. over 12 weeks. Written practice assignments help you keep track of how you think about things and using step-by-step worksheets to challenge your thoughts. There are two versions of this therapy; in one you'll write about your most traumatic experience, and read this account daily. For Veterans unable or unwilling to do this, the therapy focus is entirely on challenging thoughts.

- **Prolonged Exposure (PE)** It's natural to avoid things that make us uncomfortable. Unfortunately, avoiding tends to keep symptoms of PTSD (especially anxiety) around because you don't have an to prove them wrong. Therefore, the focus of PE is to help people slowly face uncomfortable things so that they won't remain as upset and you have more choice about where and what you choose to do.

During PE, you'll meet with your therapist once-weekly for 90min. over 9-12 weeks. You'll tell the story about what happened during the trauma, which will be tape-recorded, and you'll listen to the recording on your own. Homework will also involve having you gradually start to do things that you usually fear or avoid.

#### **\*Group Treatments\***

For these treatments, you'll meet as part of a group (typically 3-9 veterans and led by two therapists). Some groups are tailored to specific types of problems and may not allow new members after the group has started.

- **Group Cognitive Processing Therapy (G-CPT)** The way you think about things affects how you feel and what you do. Traumatic experiences can change how you think about things, and this can keep you stuck in feeling anxious or angry, even though the experience is over. The focus of CPT is about two major areas: 1) how did your traumatic experience affect the way you think about yourself, others, and the world?; 2) how can you challenge those thoughts in way so you feel better? For G-CPT, you'll meet with a group (typically 5-9 veterans and two co-therapists) once-weekly for 90 minutes for 12 weeks in a row. Each week, new skills are introduced. Weekly written practice assignments include keeping track of how you think about things and using step-by-step worksheets to challenge your thoughts. An advantage of the group setting is getting feedback from and spending time with other Veterans with

similar difficulties. In this group you are not asked to discuss the specific details of your past traumatic experiences.

- **Behavioral Activation (BA)** People with PTSD often stop or pull away from things that they used to find enjoyable or meaningful. Withdrawal from your life can make your PTSD worse and lead to depression. Behavioral Activation (BA) focuses on helping you become active in your life again, either by restarting activities you used to enjoy and find meaningful or by helping you to develop new meaningful activities. This treatment focuses on the present—the things in your current life that are stopping you from living the kind of life you would like to lead. This is different from other therapies that focus on the past. The BA group meets weekly for 10 weeks. You may find that BA will be all you will need to get your life back on track. Or, you may find that BA gets things rolling and that you'd like additional PTSD treatment when we're done.
- **PTSD Class for Couples** Symptoms of PTSD can be hard on even the strongest relationship. The PTSD Class for Couples is an educational group for veterans and their partners; it meets once-weekly for 8 weeks. The aim is to help couples reduce the impact that PTSD symptoms have on their relationship by learning about the symptoms, exploring the effects of the symptoms on their relationship, and learning skills for coping as a couple.
- **PTSD Anger Group** Anger is often described as the most common concern among Veterans with PTSD. This group meets once-weekly for 12 weeks to address PTSD-related issues that can lead to problems with anger. Specifically, relaxation techniques are used to reduce tension, therapy strategies are used to identify and challenge ways of thinking that fuel anger, and assertiveness skills are taught to help Veterans resolve conflicts more peacefully.

#### **\*Treatments offered in other clinics that may be helpful for PTSD\***

- **Seeking Safety** PTSD and substance abuse often occur together. Seeking Safety is a present-focused group therapy for Veterans dealing with both disorders. The group meets once-weekly for 25 weeks. Veterans can join the group at any time, after an initial introduction meeting. The main purpose of the group is to teach healthy coping skills that are helpful for symptoms of both PTSD and substance abuse. Currently there are separate groups for Vietnam and OIF/OEF veterans. This treatment is offered through the Addictions Treatment Program (ADTP).
- **Mindfulness, Meditation, and Yoga classes** The Madison VA offers guided instruction in mindfulness, meditation, yoga, tai chi, qigong, and relaxation through the Complementary and Alternative Therapies Program. These classes generally run for 4-8 weeks, new classes start every few months. Classes are free to all veterans. The techniques taught in these classes include breath awareness, body scanning, gentle stretching, and meditation. They're designed to counteract the effects of stress, depression, and anxiety. Research has shown that these practices can be helpful in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, along with helping people better cope with chronic pain.
- **Medications** There are a variety of medications that can be used to treat the symptoms of PTSD. These medications range from antidepressants to other categories of psychiatric medications. Sometimes Veterans elect to take medication as their only treatment, but more often medication is combined with therapy. Your treatment team will work with you and figure out what the best plan is for your care, depending on your preferences.

There are several effective treatments for PTSD and many individuals can recover from this disorder and lead productive and fulfilling lives. For more information on treatments for PTSD - go to [http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/information/treatmt/tre\\_type.jsp](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/information/treatmt/tre_type.jsp).